

Folic Acid Knowledge and Use in Alaska

Data are from the Alaska Birth Defects Registry and
The Alaska Folic Acid Survey (December 2000)

Approximately nine Alaskan babies are born every year with very serious defects of the spinal cord or brain, called neural tube defects or NTDs (0.93 per 1,000 live births, 95% CI: 0.6, 1.3). The vitamin supplement folic acid, when taken before and during pregnancy, can reduce the risk of an NTD-affected pregnancy by 50-70%. One challenge, however, is spreading the word about the benefits of folic acid to women of childbearing age, and more importantly, to convey the importance of taking folic acid BEFORE pregnancy occurs.

In December 2000, a statewide telephone survey was conducted to gather information about the knowledge and use of folic acid among Alaskan women.

Alaska Folic Acid Survey Results:

Of the women surveyed (N= 395 women, ages 18 - 44):

- 63%** Take vitamins or supplements
- 44%** Take vitamins or supplements that contain folic acid
- 75%** Heard of folic acid
- 23%** Know folic acid prevents birth defects

Among women who have heard of folic acid (n=296), **28%** know that folic acid prevents birth defects

Among women who know that folic acid prevents birth defects (n=91), information about folic acid came from the following sources:

Among women who know that folic acid prevents birth defects (n=91), **58%** take a vitamin supplement that contains folic acid

- 70%** from publications, such as magazines, newspaper articles, or books
- 52%** from media, such as radio or television
- 41%** from a health care professional